

June 6, 2008

The Honourable Tony Clement, P.C., M.P.
Federal Minister of Health, Health Canada
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture
Postal Locator: 0906C
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

The Honourable Jim Prentice
Minister of Industry
C.D. Howe Building, 235 Queen Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0H5

The Honourable Ted McMeekin
Ontario Minister of Government & Consumer Services
99 Wellesley Street W., 4th Floor, Ste. 4320
Toronto, ON M7A 1W3

Dear Minister Clement, Minister Prentice and Minister McMeekin:

On May 21, 2008, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Board of Health received information regarding food and beverage marketing to children. The Board voted in favour of the recommendation to ban commercial advertising of all food and beverages to children less than 13 years of age at a provincial and national level. The Board of Health is communicating its position to a broad range of local, provincial and national governmental and community organizations. Please see a briefing note and resolution 08-06 attached.

The Board came to this decision based on a number of factors, including the high levels of obesity and poor diet among Canada's children, significant gaps in Canada's system of advertising self-regulation, the overall poor nutritional quality of foods marketed to children, research showing the influence of advertising on children's diets and health, and young children's inherent vulnerability and lack of cognitive abilities to objectively evaluate marketing messages.

Regulating food advertising to Canadian children requires a multi-sectoral, multi-level approach, including both federal and provincial action. At a federal level, Health Canada and Industry Canada can restrict commercial food advertising targeted to children through amendments to the *Food & Drugs Act* and the *Competition Act*. A first step would be to support Bill c-414, a private member's bill that was introduced to parliament in 2007. At a provincial level, the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services should support Bill 53, introduced by Rosario Marchese, a New Democratic Party MPP, to amend the *Consumer Protection Act*. This approach would effectively ban advertising targeted to children and is similar to restrictions in Quebec where restrictions have already been upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Page 2....

Barrie:

15 Sperling Drive
Barrie, ON
L4M 6K9
(705) 721-7520
FAX (705) 721-1495

Collingwood:

280 Pretty River Pkwy.
Collingwood, ON
L9Y 4J5
(705) 445-0804
FAX (705) 445-6498

Cookstown:

2-25 King Street S.
Cookstown, ON
L0L 1L0
(705) 458-1103
FAX (705) 458-0105

Gravenhurst:

5 Pineridge Gate
Gravenhurst, ON
P1P 1Z3
(705) 684-9090
FAX (705) 684-9887

Huntsville:

34 Chaffey St.
Huntsville, ON
P1H 1K1
(705) 789-8813
FAX (705) 789-7245

Midland:

1156 St. Andrew's Dr.
Box 626, Midland, ON
L4R 4L3
(705) 526-9324
FAX: (705) 526-1513

Orillia:

12-575 West St., S.
Orillia, ON
L3V 7N6
(705) 325-9565
FAX (705) 325-2091

Research shows that food advertising influences children's food preferences, purchase requests and consumption. There is strong evidence that young children lack the cognitive abilities to objectively evaluate marketing messages. The Supreme Court of Canada concluded that "advertising directed at young children is per se manipulative". Government at the federal and provincial level can, and should, intervene to ensure that children are not specifically targeted with commercial advertising of any kind. We believe that support of the above mentioned Bills are appropriate next steps.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Roughley". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Dennis Roughley,
Chair, Simcoe Muskoka District Board of Health

Att. (2)

- c. Linda Nagel, Advertising Standards of Canada
- Glenn O'Farrell, Canadian Association of Broadcasters
- John Gustavon, Canadian marketing Association
- Ron Lund, Association of Canadian Advertisers
- Minister Margaret Best, Ministry of Health Promotion
- Minister George Smitherman, Ministry of Health and Long Term Care
- Minister Deb Matthews, Ministry of Children and Youth Services
- Connie Uetrecht, Ontario Public Health Association
- Linda Stewart, Association of Local Public Health Agencies

SIMCOE MUSKOKA DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT
Briefing Note

Item 8.1

Food and Beverage Marketing to Children

Update: New

Date: May 2008

Issue:

Children today are exposed to a greater intensity and frequency of marketing messages than any previous generation. A review of the current system and proposed industry voluntary changes finds substantial shortcomings and raises doubt that industry self-regulation could adequately address public health concerns related to children's marketing. An analysis of approaches to alter the children's marketing environment finds that a ban on the commercial advertising of food and beverages to children under the age of thirteen years is appropriate in Canada at this time.

Recommendation:

That the Board of Health endorses Resolution 08-06 (Appendix A) *Food and Beverage Marketing to Children*, which urges Canadian decision-makers to prohibit all commercial advertising of food and beverages to children under the age of thirteen years.

Current Facts:

Health experts agree that exposure to commercial promotion of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods and beverages can adversely affect children's nutritional status¹. As a result, international health experts called for national action to protect children from marketing by reducing the volume and impact of the commercial promotion of junk foods.

2007 House of Commons Standing Committee on Health calls for investigation of the regulation of marketing to children and its impact on obesity².

In Ontario, the 2004 report of CMOH calls for comprehensive, multi-sectoral action including exploring options to control food advertising targeting children³. A number of local boards of health considered motions or directed staff to take action to address recommendations in this report. The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Board of Health endorsed the Healthy Living Strategy and Call to Action as their response to the report.

In February 2008, Canada's Food and Beverage Industry responded to health concerns with the launch of the *Canadian Children's Food & Beverage Advertising Initiative*⁴. Since advertising to children is primarily regulated by industry itself, many health experts agree that this self-regulated initiative is not in the public's best interest.

In April, 2008, the Toronto Board of Health requested the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA), in cooperation with the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa), convene a meeting in 2008 of the Medical Officers of Health and Boards of Health to coordinate advocacy for an Ontario ban on all commercial food and beverage advertising targeted toward children under the age of 13⁵.

Background:

See background report from Toronto Public Health.

1. Food and Beverage Marketing to Children. Toronto Public Health Staff Report. February 8, 2008. (Appendix B)

References:

¹World Health Organization. Marketing of Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages to Children: Report of a WHO Forum Technical Meeting. Oslo, Norway 2-5 May, 2006. Available Online at <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/publications/Oslo%20meeting%20layout%2027%20NOVEMBER.pdf>.

²Healthy Weights Healthy Kids. Report of the Standing Committee on Health. March 2007, 39th Parliament, 1st session. Available online at <http://cmte.parl.gc.ca/cmte/CommitteePublication.aspx?SourceId=199309>.

³Healthy Weights, Healthy Lives. 2004 Chief Medical Officer of Health Report. Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. Available Online at http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/ministry_reports/cmoh04_report/cmoh_04.html.

⁴Canadian Children's Food & Beverage Advertising Initiative. Advertising Standards of Canada and Food & Consumer Products of Canada. April, 2007. Available Online at <http://adstandards.com/en/pressReleases/childrensInitiativePressRelease.asp>.

⁵Toronto Public Health, Board of Health Decision Document. Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada Policy Consensus Conference – Obesity and the Impact of Marketing on Children, April 7, 2008.

Contact:

Joyce Fox, Director Healthy Living Service	Ext. 7210
Christine Bushey, Manager, Chronic Disease Prevention-Healthy Lifestyle Program	Ext. 7376
Renée Gaudet, Public Health Nutritionist	Ext. 7325

Food and Beverage Marketing to Children

Resolution 08-06

WHEREAS poor diet during childhood has been linked to chronic disease in adulthood;
and

WHEREAS the leading cause of death in Simcoe County and Muskoka District is heart
disease; and

WHEREAS Boards of Health are mandated to reduce the premature mortality and
morbidity from preventable chronic diseases; and

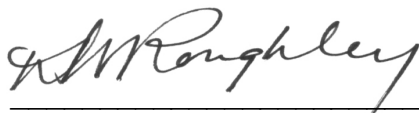
WHEREAS research demonstrates that exposure to commercial promotion of energy-
dense, nutrient-poor foods and beverages can adversely affect children's nutritional
status; and

WHEREAS health experts have called for national action to protect children from
marketing by reducing the volume and impact of the commercial promotion of junk
foods;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
Board of Health send a letter to the Federal Minister of Health, Industry Canada and the
Ontario Ministry of Government and Consumer Services to urge them to prohibit all
commercial advertising of food and beverages to children under the age of thirteen
years;

AND FURTHERMORE, that the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Board of Health
inform the Ontario Public Health Association and the Association of Local Public Health
Agencies of their interest in participating in the meeting being convened in 2008 to
coordinate advocacy for an Ontario ban on all commercial food and beverage
advertising targeted toward children under the age of 13;

AND FURTHERMORE, that a copy of the letter above and this Resolution be forwarded
to Advertising Standards of Canada, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, the
Canadian Marketing Association, the Association of Canadian Advertisers, the Minister
of Health Promotion, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Minister of
Children and Youth Services, local MPs and MPPs, the Ontario Public Health
Association, and the Association of Local Public Health Agencies for information.



Chair, Board of Health

May 21, 2008

Date